

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:

Please amend the claims as follows:

Claims 1 - 5 (Canceled)

Claim 6 (Previously Presented) A bipolar electrosurgical instrument, comprising:

inner and outer members each including a jaw member having an opposable seal surface disposed thereon, the inner and outer members being movable from a first position wherein the opposable seal surfaces are disposed in spaced-apart relation relative to one another to a second position to facilitate grasping tissue between the opposable seal surfaces, the opposable seal surfaces including a non-stick coating for reducing tissue adhesion during the sealing process, the non-stick material being deposited on the opposable seal surfaces and being selected from the group of materials consisting of nitrides and nickel/chrome alloys;

at least one connector in electrical communication with the opposable seal surfaces and adapted to electrically couple the opposable seal surfaces to a source of electrosurgical energy to facilitate conducting electrosurgical energy through tissue disposed therebetween during usage of the instrument;

at least one stop disposed adjacent to at least one of the opposable seal surfaces to maintain a separation distance between the opposable seal

surfaces when the inner and outer members are moved to the second position;
and

a ratchet disposed on one of the inner and outer members and at least one complementary interlocking mechanical interface disposed on the other of the inner and outer members, the ratchet and the complementary interlocking mechanical interface defining at least one interlocking position to maintain a closure pressure in the range of about 7 kg/cm² to about 13 kg/cm² between opposable seal surfaces.

Claim 7-8 (Canceled)

Claim 9 (Previously Presented) A bipolar electrosurgical instrument according to claim 6 wherein the non-stick coating includes one of TiN, ZrN, TiAlN, CrN, nickel/chrome alloys with a Ni/Cr ratio of approximately 5:1, Inconel 600, Ni200 and Ni201.

Claim 10 (Previously Presented) A bipolar electrosurgical instrument according to claim 6 wherein the opposable seal surfaces are manufactured from a non-stick material.

Claim 11 (Previously Presented) A bipolar electrosurgical instrument according to claim 6 wherein the at least one stop is manufactured from an insulative material.

Claim 12-16 (Canceled)

Claim 16 (Previously presented) A bipolar electrosurgical instrument, comprising:

inner and outer members each including a jaw member having an opposable seal surface disposed thereon, the inner and outer members being movable from a first position wherein the opposable seal surfaces are disposed in spaced-apart relation relative to one another to a second position to facilitate grasping tissue between the opposable seal surfaces, the opposable seal surfaces including a non-stick coating for reducing tissue adhesion during the sealing process, the non-stick material being deposited on the opposable seal surfaces and including one of TiN, ZrN, TiAlN, CrN, nickel/chrome alloys with a Ni/Cr ratio of approximately 5:1, Inconel 600, Ni200 and Ni201;

at least one connector in electrical communication with the opposable seal surfaces and adapted to electrically couple the opposable seal surfaces to a source of electrosurgical energy to facilitate conducting electrosurgical energy through tissue disposed therebetween during usage of the instrument;

at least one stop disposed adjacent to at least one of the opposable seal surfaces to maintain a separation distance between the opposable seal surfaces when the inner and outer members are moved to the second position; and

a ratchet disposed on one of the inner and outer members and at least one complementary interlocking mechanical interface disposed on the other of the inner and outer members, the ratchet and the complementary interlocking mechanical interface defining at least one interlocking position to maintain a closure pressure in the range of about 7 kg/cm² to about 13 kg/cm² between opposable seal surfaces.

Claim 17 (Previously presented) A bipolar electrosurgical instrument, comprising:

inner and outer members each including a jaw member having an opposable seal surface disposed thereon, the inner and outer members being movable from a first position wherein the opposable seal surfaces are disposed in spaced-apart relation relative to one another to a second position to facilitate grasping tissue between the opposable seal surfaces, the opposable seal surfaces being manufactured from a non-stick material for reducing tissue adhesion during the sealing process;

at least one connector in electrical communication with the opposable seal surfaces and adapted to electrically couple the opposable seal surfaces to a source of electrosurgical energy to facilitate conducting electrosurgical energy through tissue disposed therebetween during usage of the instrument;

at least one stop disposed adjacent to at least one of the opposable seal surfaces to maintain a separation distance between the opposable seal

surfaces when the inner and outer members are moved to the second position;
and

a ratchet disposed on one of the inner and outer members and at least one complementary interlocking mechanical interface disposed on the other of the inner and outer members, the ratchet and the complementary interlocking mechanical interface defining at least one interlocking position to maintain a closure pressure in the range of about 7 kg/cm² to about 13 kg/cm² between opposable seal surfaces.